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**BUREAU FOR DEVELOPMENT, DEMOCRACY, AND INNOVATION
LOCAL, FAITH, AND TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS HUB**

Locally Led Development Initiatives



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CHAMPIONING LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT: DUONG NGUYEN DUC



PHOTO CREDIT: USAID
DUONG NGUYEN DUC, USAID/VIETNAM

As one of the first [Local Works](#) Missions, the USAID Mission in Vietnam has been at the forefront of shaping locally led development efforts and thinking within USAID – and with the additional challenge of doing so in a so-called “non-permissive environment.” Duong Nguyen Duc, the Local Partner Organization & Development Advisor and Local Works Partner Lead at the Mission, has spearheaded this work since the beginning of the Local Works program.

The Mission looked to Local Works at a time of dramatic change in the country. “The rapid growth of the economy in the last two decades has transformed Vietnam economically and socially, raising the living standard and lifting millions out of poverty,” Duong shared. However, “this growth also generated new and complex development challenges, from environmental degradation to the rise of income inequality.”

One of the first challenges Duong and his team encountered was the operating environment - and particularly cautions from [local] authorities. “A lot of people didn’t understand the program, and they looked at us like, you know, this is the program that is promoting civil society,” Duong said. “So Local Works, basically, for the first two to three years, is very sensitive.” To build trust with citizens and authorities alike, the Mission strategically chose to address air pollution, which affects everyone regardless of class or status. “The society, and the police, and the security, and the political leaders, and their families. They are also facing the same thing,” Duong noted. By selecting an issue of concern for communities and government leaders alike, and with a commitment to transparency, he says, “Step by step, we gained their trust.”

Now, the Mission is paving the way with an innovative approach to citizen engagement and collective action around environmental pollution. “There needs to be a network of people collectively working together to resolve something,” he shares. “The approach should not be just bottom-up or top-down; it should be a mixture. You need to have the government, the local government, and also the citizens. For some of the programs I saw, it’s very clear that if you purely rely on the community or the grassroots level, without considering the political will of what the leaders need and trying to merge it and make it mutually inclusive, then you won’t have as much success. That’s from my own experiences.”

As Duong emphasizes, it’s the people on the ground – the so-called “positive deviants” – who are doing the work. “You have to find them, and they are actually the ones who are leading the whole locally led development – not us. We are providing the backup, the support, whatever they need in terms of capacity, the funding, in terms of technical assistance, in terms of the network and connecting, because we can help them be connected. But they must work independently, they are the leaders that lead the whole program.”

“Local Works is a unique program that requires flexibility. Because we are piloting, we are committed to our effort, but we know that there would be a failure or some parts of the model may not work. We need the whole USAID Mission to commit to that... We make a rule of thumb that before doing the social or behavior change, you have to do the behavior change within USAID, because you need to be able to back up for you.”

And Duong’s efforts to promote this approach extend beyond the Local Works program. He advocated for the Mission to include the collective action approach employed in the environmental programs in the [Country Development Cooperation Strategy](#) (CDCS). “We also consider collective action and locally led development to be cross-sector,” Duong notes. “It’s not only within one program; it’s across all the programs within the Vietnam Mission.”

He adds that the CDCS includes the specific intermediate result of collective action to reduce environmental pollution. “The term of collective action is actually derived from the Local Works program. And we try to advance the local actors and empower them to work together to resolve it by themselves, and then leverage or mobilize different types of local resources to contribute to that.”

To make this work, Duong emphasizes the importance of culture. “The Vietnam Mission also has a strong commitment to learning, innovating, and experimenting to find a way to better support locally led development. This is, as I said, a cross-cutting mission and agenda, and so the lessons learned and a willingness to adapt is important for us.”

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USAID/Vietnam is part of the [Local Works](#) program. The [Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships Hub](#) recognizes individuals from the USAID Local Works Missions for their exemplary work in advancing locally led development.



MALAWI: IMPROVING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR COOPERATIVES

PHOTO CREDIT: LAND O'LAKES VENTURE37
COOPERATIVE MEMBERS IN MALAWI

For cooperatives, like any business, law and regulation can either hinder or advance the enabling environment. In Malawi, the policy governing cooperatives has not been updated in more than 20 years, and as such does not reflect the needs of the country's evolving cooperative sector. It also does not align with other national policy initiatives, particularly those pertaining to economic growth, meaning that cooperatives are often not included or are overlooked entirely in national plans and programs where they could have a major role.

Through the [Cooperative Development Program](#) (CDP), [Land O'Lakes Venture37](#) (Venture37) has engaged with local partners, such as the Malawi Federation of Cooperatives (MAFECO), the Government of Malawi's Ministry of Industry and Trade, and other development actors to update the old cooperative policy.

Proposed updates include:

- Eliminating legal obstacles to cooperative development, and positioning cooperatives as a national priority by establishing a Ministry of Cooperatives to serve as an official regulatory body.
- Unifying cooperatives under one, nationally recognized apex organization, which will improve collaboration and networking within the sector.
- Improving access to markets, including capacity building in value addition and certification, the establishment of a center for market information, the use of clean production and processing techniques, and issuing incentives for cooperatives that adopt innovative technology.
- Meeting cooperatives' demand for capital by working to create a well-funded financial institution, like a cooperative bank or credit union.

The revised policy is waiting to go to Parliament for a vote. In the meantime, Venture37 and MAFECO are planning for a potential launch. They plan to raise awareness about the potential updates by meeting with local stakeholders, developing radio and television programs, and developing other marketing materials in the national language. If passed into law, the policy will create a better operating environment for cooperatives across Malawi.

When I think about Service Learning and Volunteerism in Ukraine, one word comes to my mind...



UKRAINE: TEACHERS AT THE FOREFRONT OF CHANGE

PHOTO CREDIT: PEACE CORPS/UKRAINE

A WORD CLOUD FROM THE ONLINE TEACHER TRAINING. TEACHERS ANSWERED THE QUESTION "WHEN I THINK ABOUT SERVICE LEARNING AND VOLUNTEERISM IN UKRAINE, ONE WORD COMES TO MY MIND." TOP RESPONSES ARE FEATURED IN LARGER TEXT, INCLUDING DEDICATION, COMMITMENT, AND HELP.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers in Ukraine have faced numerous challenges, from navigating the switch to online schooling, to dealing with ongoing emotional and financial stress for teachers and students alike. At the same time, volunteerism and finding ways to support other community members have never been more important. That's why Peace Corps, with support from the [Small Project Assistance Program](#), created training for teachers.

The four-week, intensive online training covered remote learning, coaching, and other skills to support teachers so that they can better prepare the next generation of community-minded leaders. Nearly 75 teachers joined the sessions, in which they had a safe space to exchange success stories, discuss challenges, and develop ideas. Now, inspired participants are not only using the resources and skills they learned, but are spreading the word and resources among their colleagues as well.

As Ukraine's Ministry of Education noted: "A teacher is the pivotal figure in the reform. No changes are possible without him or her."



PAUSE AND REFLECT: ENGAGING PARTNERS IN LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT

Interested in learnings and tools to support locally led development? Learn from the USAID Mission in Armenia: their [Local Works](#) staff and local research partner, Prisma, shared their experience piloting the [Locally Led Development Checklist](#), a new pause and reflect tool, to strategically reflect on how they were engaging local stakeholders and plan for future engagement.

“Very often we need to deliver and rush for the results and lack time and opportunities for stopping and reflecting on our path and approaches. Tips: be patient, depending on the scope of the activity, allow for some time for reflection. Do it sometimes at the midpoint of the projects so you will have time to adapt.”

-Lusine Hakobyan, USAID/Armenia

Participants noted: “For Local Works, this is really important, and the time and opportunities are often lacking in our regular mechanisms. This time to stop and reflect is something that is really valued and it brings closer engagement and better results in the long run.”

[Read an interview about their experience here.](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS



What Can We Learn from Collaborative Redesigns? The [Cooperative Development Program](#) piloted an approach to collaborative redesign. Emily Varga, a Cooperative Business Specialist, shares lessons learned from the process and how to put adaptive management into practice. [Check out the interview.](#)

Local Works in Action: In Zimbabwe, [Local Works](#) is looking to design programming with, by, and for youth. A new partnership with the private sector is laying the groundwork for the program to move forward. [Check out the latest.](#)

Is Samantha Power Taking on the Aid Establishment? This article from Devex highlights recent statements from USAID's Administrator, including the emphasis on localization and locally led development. [Check it out.](#)



ICYMI: New Tools for Localization and Locally Led Development Practitioners: DDI's [Local, Faith and Transformative Partnerships \(LFT\) Hub](#) invites you to check out and weigh in on [a new set of resources](#):

- [Locally Led Development Spectrum](#): Locally led development is not a single approach, but a range of ways that USAID, its partners, and communities can work together to shift agenda-setting and decision-making power into the hands of local actors.
- [Locally Led Development Checklist](#) and [Facilitation Guide](#): The Locally Led Development Checklist is a pause and reflect tool, designed to help USAID Missions, partners, and other practitioners consider and adopt locally led approaches at every stage of the development process.



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